

NSC BRIEFING

25 March 1954

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**THE KAREN INSURGENCY IN BURMA**

I. Announcement early this week of a new Karen state in Burma underlines fact that successful withdrawal over 5,000 Chinese Nationalists does not end big security problem in that country.

A. Many active and potential insurgents still remain.

B. Karens are largest single body of these.

II. They are of Thai racial origin and number about 3 million.

A. Live mostly in Irrawaddy delta and hilly area of eastern Burma.

B. For centuries were persecuted and made slaves by Burmese.

C. Early 19th century Baptist missionaries began missionary work among Karens and now most their leaders devout Baptists.

D. In last war, Karens opposed entry of Japanese when latter welcomed by most Burmans.

E. When Burma got independence in 1948, a few Karens supported the government but <sup>most</sup> remained aloof and demanded separate state.

F. In 1949 proclaimed state of Kawthulay in east Burma; new state proclaimed this week in Kawkaireik is probably satellite of Kawthulay.

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RE-REVIEW

- 2 -

G. Karens fine fighters; now have 5 - 7,000 men in field. Use hit and run tactics.

III. Karens always had big supply problem.

- A. For while got along with weapons of Karen army units which rebelled, those received from OSS and those captured from Burmese.
- B. Last 2 years aided by Chinese Nationalists. Rebuffed offers aid from Burmese Communists.
- C. Evacuation of Nationalists leaves them in bad position. Several hundred Karens given up recently and surrendered.

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- B. There are several brands Communist rebels, numbering in all 9 - 12,000. They now loosely allied. *There is also a Communist faction in Rangoon which is legally in opposition and not in revolt.*
- C. Karen-Communist cooperation would not increase total number of insurgents but would greatly strengthen Communist movement in Burma.
- D. Communist strategy is to develop united front, undermine country's economy and force expensive military effort by government.

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V. Chinese Communists not been inactive in this situation.

A. [redacted] Kachin and Shan

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tribes living north of Karens.

B. Together these two groups number over 1 1/2 million.

1. They too resent rule from Rangoon.

2. But only small numbers so far rebelled.

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VI. Danger is that Shans, Kachins and other smaller tribes will league with Communists and Karens.

A. Such a coalition probably couldn't take over Burma by force.

B. But might create such chaos that Commies in [redacted] Rangoon, would eventually be able assume power.

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*The communist in Rangoon form a faction which declined to join the Union front when it began in 1949, and who have remained legally in opposition to the government.*

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THE KAREN INSURGENCY IN BURMA

- I. Announcement new Karen state points  
Burma's continued insecurity.
  - A. Many insurgents still active.
  - B. Karens largest group.
- II. Karens of Thai origin, number 3 million.
  - A. Live in Irrawaddy delta and  
east Burma hills.
  - B. Long persecuted by Burmese.
  - C. Many Karen leaders Baptists.
  - D. In contrast to Burmans, fought  
Japanese.
  - E. Most Karens demanded autonomy  
when Burma independent.
  - F. In 1949 proclaimed own state,  
Kawthulay, in east Burma. New  
state probably satellite of  
Kawthulay.

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G. Karens fine fighters: 5-7,000  
in field.

III. Karens have big supply problem.

- A. Weapons came from Karen army  
defectors, OSS, captures.
- B. Last two years aided by Chinese  
Nationalists, rebuffed Communist  
aid offers.
- C. Hurt by Nationalist evacuation;  
some Karens recently surrendered.

IV.

- B. Several bands Communist rebels  
total 9-12,000: loosely allied.
- C. Karen cooperation would strengthen  
Communist movement.

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[REDACTED]

D. Communist strategy; united front, undermine economy, tie down government forces.

V. Chinese Communists busy.

[REDACTED]

B. The tribes number over 1-2 million; resent rule from Rangoon, but only few have rebelled; some of latter China.

VI. Danger they and other tribes join Karens and Communists.

A. Resulting coalition could win military victory.

B. But ensuing chaos might result in Communist takeover in Rangoon.

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C. Communists have front party  
there that stays clear of  
insurgents.

1. These stayed above  
ground when largest  
group Commies rebelled  
in 1948.

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